



# Evaluation of a Teacher Preparation Program

Kelly Mulligan

Faculty Advisor: Joanna Badara, PhD

Department of Education, School of Engineering, Business and Education  
University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT

**Abstract:** A survey was conducted in the Education Department at University of Bridgeport, at the end of our teacher candidates’ program of study. The study was conducted to gain insight into the teacher candidates’ perceptions of their preparation for a career in teaching. The data also provided information regarding candidates’ reasons for choosing teaching as a career. The results collected from the survey were used to make program improvements and curricula development, which have led to National Accreditation status from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

**Method:** Teacher candidates were asked to complete this survey at the end of their teacher preparation program in the Education Department. The survey was given to all candidates, regardless of the teacher certification program in which they were enrolled (i.e., elementary, secondary, or music education). Data were collected anonymously from 103 respondents during the 2016-2017 academic year. The survey was adapted from the *Teach for America* exit survey (Rochkind, Ott and Immerwahr, 2007) and included specific program-related as well as generalized questions regarding why respondents entered the teaching profession, and what would likely keep them in the teaching profession. Respondents were asked 98 items. These included closed-ended opinion questions which tackled various issues in multiple ways. Most questions asked the respondents to use a scale (either three or four points) to rate different aspects of their training or teaching experiences, and to measure the strength of various beliefs they may have about teaching. Many of the four-point scales used in the survey were Likert scales, where questions asked the degree to which a respondent accepted a particular statement. The survey also included questions in which the respondents were asked to choose between two mutually exclusive and balanced statements. Analyzed in context with other results, these “forced choice” questions shed light on respondents’ priorities and avoided the central tendency bias inherent in Likert-type questions. In a few instances, the survey also contained compound questions combining two seemingly separate concepts, thereby mirroring the way teachers tend to deal with such concepts (Rochkind, Ott and Immerwahr, 2007).

**Results:** The questions that were asked in the survey covered three main areas: 1) reasons for choosing teaching as career, 2) drawbacks to the teaching career, 3) program course work, and 4) perceptions on candidates’ preparation for their first year of teaching. In the area pertaining to candidates’ reasons for choosing teaching as a career, 67% of candidates indicated that they had wanted to become teachers for a long time before entering our program and 74% of candidates indicated that they chose teaching as a lifelong career. Candidates’ choice of teaching as a career correlated to the fact that 58% of candidates responded that an important decision factor for choosing teaching as a career was because they were excited to get students to learn.

### References:

Donovan, C., Green, K. E., & Seidel, K. (2017). Differential Item Functioning on a Measure of Perceptions of Preparation for Teachers, Teacher Candidates, and Program Personnel. *Leadership in Education Research*, 4(1), 27-54.

Eri, O., & Bozkirli, K. Ç. (2018). Examining The General Efficacy Perceptions Of Candidate Teachers Towards Measurement And Evaluation In Terms Of Their Programs. *European Journal of Alternative Education Studies*, 3(2), 32-46.

Rochkind, J., Ott, A., Immerwahr, J., Doble, J., & Johnson, J. (2007). Lessons Learned: New Teachers Talk about Their Jobs, Challenges and Long-Range Plans. *Public Agenda*, (3), 1-38.

**Introduction:** Inquiry into teacher education practices is critical to preparing quality teachers. Many previous studies used survey approaches to evaluate teacher candidates’ perceptions of various aspects related to their teacher preparation programs (Donovan, Green & Seidel, 2017; Er & Bozkirli, 2018) and used these data for program evaluation and improvement purposes. During the academic year 2016-2017, as part of our periodic self-study for program improvement, a survey was administered to exiting teacher candidates from all teacher certification programs in the Education department. The study was conducted to gain insight into the teacher candidates’ perceptions of their preparation for a career in teaching. It also provided information regarding candidates’ reasons for choosing teaching as a career.



**Data analysis:** Our survey data were analyzed by performing chi square analyses for each question. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences (at the 0.05 level) between the expected frequencies and the observed frequencies in mutually exclusive response choices. Values of  $\chi^2$  are not reported herewith, but a discussion is provided for questions for which  $\chi^2$  were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v24).

Candidates on program coursework	Candidates in the internship track	Not considered drawbacks to teaching	Candidates on their first year of teaching
100% felt prepared in educational psychology	98% had a positive role model	63% too much testing	57% felt confident in their preparation
93% knew how to write a lesson plan	72% had classroom management knowledge	54% teaching children with behavioral problems	59% felt successful
93% felt comfortable with subject specific content, such as math and science	57% had classroom discipline knowledge	58% teaching unmotivated children	84% worked in the classroom as part of the program
73% felt confident in providing student centered approaches	53% had knowledge of personalized instruction	45% having a low salary	50% felt comfortable working and communicating with parents
98% felt confident in differentiating lessons	53% advice on personalized instruction	47% not being rewarded professionally	50% felt confident in developing lesson plans that were on target with learning objectives
61% felt confident in engaging ethnically diverse students	41% gained skills in working with gifted students	66% little prestige associated with teaching	59% felt that had students actively engaged in learning activities
77% felt comfortable with educational policy trends	44% gained soft skills such as communication with parents	66% being exposed to personal safety threats	76% felt their students were lucky to have them as their teacher